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Integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits

A critical review of the development of indicators in the context of conference follow-up**

Report of the Secretary-General

* E/1999/100.

** The first draft of the present report was reviewed by an Expert Group on Development Indicators, convened by the United Nations Statistics Division, New York, 8–10 March 1999. The list of experts is contained in annex II of this report. The same draft was also discussed during the thirtieth session of the Statistical Commission, 1–5 March 1999, New York.

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Executive summary

Accurate, timely and unbiased information is crucial to sound public policy decisions. In particular, in the context of conference follow-up, statistical indicators are indispensable. It is possible to conduct an objective assessment of the extent to which goals have been achieved only if benchmark data and reliable indicators are available.

Among international organizations, there remains room for improvement in the coordination of data collection. Such coordination can promote efficient use of resources, and can contribute to easing the burden on statistical programmes of countries. The present report argues that there are many instances of inconsistencies between data disseminated at the international level. Inconsistent definitions and methodologies lead to a loss of credibility when two or more agencies produce different indicators of the "same" concept.

The major problems, however, are the serious gaps in the international databases. These are, in most instances, a direct consequence of the lack of basic statistical data at the country level. There is an enormous mismatch between the demand for information — a demand which has increased as a result of the global conferences — and the ability of most countries to supply the required information. This report gives examples of how overwhelming for a country — even for developed countries — the sheer volume of data requests can be.

This report also reviews means of implementation. It finds that official development assistance (ODA) for the implementation of conference goals has been diminishing. In general, ODA fell to 0.22 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of member countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1997, far below the target level of 0.7 per cent. Additional work is needed to improve monitoring tools in this area.

The report concludes that possible next steps fall into two broad categories: (a) to improve partnerships at the international level and (b) to strengthen statistical capacity at the national level. Continued coordination at the international level regarding data collection, and development of concepts and methods will go a long way towards addressing the various problems related to inconsistencies. A common development indicator platform on the Internet is suggested in this context. Coordination is also necessary to focus the information demands placed on countries. This report does not propose new coordination structures, but rather recommends that efforts build upon the present mechanisms. It emphasizes, however, that improved coordination will require both a genuine commitment and the necessary resources to carry it out.

The only way to ensure the provision of statistical information on a routine basis is to build national statistical capacity. In order to strengthen this capacity the report recommends the formation of a high-level working group consisting of major donor agencies and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat to more effectively coordinate data-collection and statistical capacity-building programmes in countries. In addition, a targeted international programme to build national capacity in the areas of censuses and sample surveys is proposed.

Given the cross-cutting nature of development indicators, with both normative and operational dimensions, the Economic and Social Council is the appropriate forum in which to review the implementation and follow-up on this issue.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
	Introduction	1–5	5
I.	Indicator programmes at the international level	6–17	6
	A. Description of indicator programmes related to conferences	8–11	6
	1. Indicator initiatives responding to specific conferences	9	6
	2. Cross-conference initiatives	10–11	8
	B. Gaps and inconsistencies in indicators at the international level	12–17	8
	1. Gaps	13–15	8
	2. Inconsistencies among indicators	16–17	9
II.	Situation at country level	18–28	10
	A. Capacity of countries to produce indicators	19–20	10
	B. Impact of international actions at country level	21–28	12
III.	Means of implementation	29–38	14
IV.	Possible next steps	39–40	17
Boxes			
1.	Example of an indicator initiative for a conference follow-up: Education for All Year 2000 Assessment		7
2.	Statement of the main problems discussed in sections I and II		14
3.	The 20/20 initiative		16
4.	Monitoring of financial resources for assisting the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development		17
Annexes			
I.	List of selected global conferences, conventions and declarations		23
II.	Expert Group Meeting on Development Indicators, New York, 8–10 March 1999: list of participants		24
III.	Selection and dissemination of indicators		26
IV.	Number of international data-collection activities by organization		28
V.	Selected indicator activities linked to the follow-up of specific conferences		29
VI.	Cross-conference indicator initiatives		34
VII.	Union of core indicator sets (Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-United Nations-World Bank, United Nations Development Assistance Framework-common country assessment (UNDAF-CCA), basic social services for all (BSSA))		35

VIII. Availability and recency of data at the international level for selected indicators in the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) 39

IX. Illustrative examples of inconsistencies among indicators in international publications 42

X. Description of international data initiatives 44

Introduction

1. Indicators and statistics[1] are important tools for countries in their policy-making processes. First, they permit an assessment of the prevailing situation. Second, they permit the quantification of specific policy objectives. Third, and perhaps most importantly, they become yardsticks of the progress towards the formulated target. Countries determine their own needs for indicators and statistics, depending on their degree of socio-economic and statistical development and on their policy priorities.

2. Indicators are also essential prerequisites of worldwide review of progress towards the implementation of United Nations conference resolutions as well as of decision-making, including decisions on funding. The conferences and summits[2] of the past decade have resulted in the formulation of concrete policy goals. In many cases, these were general in nature, but in some specific cases they took the form of quantified targets.[3] Consequently, the conferences called on countries and international organizations to develop and improve the requisite statistics and indicators.[4]

3. In its deliberations on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, the Economic and Social Council recognized the importance of the issue of statistics and indicators[5] and decided to dedicate an informal meeting of the Council with panels of experts to this topic. The present report was therefore commissioned, and would consider in a comprehensive manner the work being carried out by the United Nations system, and other relevant international and national institutions, on basic indicators to measure progress towards the implementation of the integrated and coordinated follow-up of all aspects of major United Nations conferences and summits, including means of implementation, in the economic, social and related fields at all levels, with a view, as a first step, to taking stock and identifying overlapping duplication and gaps.[6]

4. Attempts at defining what an indicator is have not as yet yielded a single definition text that has been widely applied. From several of the definitions reviewed, an indicator can generally be characterized by two basic elements:

(a) It is, for example, a statistic, fact, measurement, statistical series (in other words, quantitative) or some form of evidence or perception (in other words, qualitative);

(b) It has a purpose of clarifying and defining objectives, assessing present and future direction with respect to goals and values, evaluating specific programmes, demonstrating progress, measuring changes in a specific condition or situation over time, determining impact of programmes, conveying messages.

While it is recognized that both quantitative information and qualitative information are required for some types of development analyses, this report focuses on quantitative indicators which cover a wide spectrum of development information ranging from simple statistics to indices.[7]

5. Section I of this report describes ongoing international indicator initiatives and highlights some problems in terms of gaps and inconsistencies among indicators. Section II describes the prevailing situation in many developing countries and analyses the impact of the activities of international organizations at the country level. The main problems at international and national levels are summarized in box 2, at the end of section II. Section III addresses the means of implementation. Section IV discusses some possible next steps, including proposals for building statistical capacity at the country level and for improving partnerships within the United Nations system and beyond.

I. Indicator programmes at the international level

6. The United Nations Secretariat and international agencies, funds and programmes have always contributed to the dissemination of indicators through regular publications and analytical reports. These indicators are based largely on data obtained from countries by specialized agencies (such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) as well as departments of the Secretariat and the regional commissions. Through long-standing arrangements, agencies have clearly defined areas of responsibility with respect to collecting data from countries[8] and sharing them with other agencies and organizations. These data are disseminated in electronic media or yearbooks, and are the main sources for the "flagship" publications of agencies. Other initiatives, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report* and the World Bank *World Development Indicators* which provide an important vehicle for the dissemination of development indicators, also draw from these databases.

7. An Inventory of Statistical Data-collection Activities,[9] conducted in 1995, revealed a total of 312 data-collection activities reported by international organizations. While 195 collection activities were carried out by organizations such as the regional commissions, the European Union (EU), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that cover only selected countries, 117 were carried out by global organizations involving all countries. A list of organizations collecting data from countries with the number of questionnaires is presented in annex IV.

A. Description of indicator programmes related to conferences

8. In response to the recent global conferences and summits, the demand for indicators has increased in the international arena. A large number of indicators, ranging from 18 to 134, is required for the follow-up of some of the recent conferences (see annex V). Some of these indicators have long been collected nationally and compiled internationally by the United Nations Secretariat and related organizations.[10] In fact, some conference goals were established in cognizance of the existence of data in the respective areas. Still, many of the international organizations have expanded their work to include the compilation of additional indicators for assessing progress towards conference goals. These initiatives fall into two broad categories: (a) those carried out by international organizations in response to a single conference, and (b) those undertaken to monitor a group of conferences in an integrated way.

1. Indicator initiatives responding to specific conferences

9. Annex V presents detailed information about some of the initiatives that were launched in direct response to a particular conference. This list of initiatives (which does not include many other sectoral and regional indicator initiatives[11]) and the corresponding number of indicators, clearly illuminates the potential burden these pose to countries. Programmes of indicators developed in response to specific conferences vary from agency to agency. Three types of initiatives can be distinguished:

(a) *Recommendation of a core set of indicators:* the agency disseminates a suggested list of indicators with guidelines on its implementation. These initiatives do not entail new collection of data by international organizations from countries. They aim to help the

countries make relevant indicators available to national decision makers and encourage greater use of data within countries. Examples of these initiatives are the Education for All Year 2000 Assessment (see box 1), the Work Programme on Indicators of Sustainable Development, and the Food Insecurity Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS) to be established at country level as a follow-up to the World Food Summit;

Box 1. Example of an indicator initiative for a conference follow-up: Education for All Year 2000 Assessment

The Education for All (EFA) Year 2000 Assessment was planned by an inter-agency Technical Advisory Group composed of the five main EFA-sponsoring agencies: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Based on the EFA goals, the Group selected 18 core EFA indicators and developed the general and technical guidelines, together with model tabulations for national reports. Originally 47 indicators were proposed but this was reduced because of concerns about the reporting burden.

The Technical Advisory Group also requested that the 1999 UNESCO statistical questionnaires be adapted and used as the main instrument for collecting national aggregate statistics needed to produce the global report on EFA 2000. The UNESCO questionnaires regularly gather statistics needed for deriving not only 14 of the 18 core EFA indicators, but also statistics on secondary and tertiary education that extend beyond the scope of the EFA 2000 Assessment.

Each country has been requested to form a National EFA Committee to carry out the assessment and prepare the national EFA report. These committees have been asked to systematically involve the education statistical services within the Ministry of Education and the National Statistical Office in collecting and producing the required EFA statistics and indicators. These services are often those that are responsible for responding to the UNESCO annual statistical questionnaires.

(b) *Repackaging of existing indicator series* with the aim of producing new publications or databases to follow up on the conference. Examples of this type of initiative include *World Employment Report 1998–99: Employability in the Global Economy: How Training Matters*,[12] published by ILO, which addresses the concern about "sustainable livelihoods" of the World Summit for Social Development; and *The World's Women, 1970–1980*[13] (published in 1991), *The World's Women, 1995*[14] (published in 1995) and a third issue which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is preparing for the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Of the same type, but which does not respond to any particular conference, is the compilation of indicators by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries to monitor the achievement of priority programmes of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s;

(c) *Development of a new data-collection activity:* the agency, in accordance with its mandates, selects a set of indicators that specifically address measuring progress towards achieving the conference goals, and undertakes to collect from countries the underlying data to compile these indicators. These indicators are then compiled and disseminated on a regular or ad hoc basis. Examples are the set of indicators that WHO collects every three years from countries to guide the evaluation of Health for All strategies; the multiple indicator cluster survey sponsored by UNICEF to assist countries in obtaining data for reviewing the implementation of the mid-decade goals of the World Summit for Children; and the compilation of a list of indicators by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) as a continuation of the work that began as part of the preparation for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) conference.

2. Cross-conference initiatives

10. Recently, initiatives have been undertaken to take a more integrated approach by considering several conferences.[15] This work generally involves inter-agency collaboration and aims to define a common set of indicators for goals from four or more conferences. The most recent of these initiatives are the common country assessment indicators of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF-CCA), the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), adopted by the Statistical Commission, the indicators for basic social services for all (BSSA) of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) indicators, developed in collaboration with the United Nations and the World Bank. Annex VI presents these initiatives, describing their purposes and the number of indicators included.

11. There have been attempts at harmonization of these core sets. In particular, the recent process of revising the UNDAF-CCA indicator framework has significantly improved the match between the CCA indicators, the largest list, and other indicator sets. Only 3 indicators of the MNSDS,[16] and 1 out of the 21 core indicators in the OECD-United Nations-World Bank set, are not included in the UNDAF-CCA list (see annex VII).

B. Gaps and inconsistencies in indicators at the international level

12. The various indicator-related activities undertaken by international organizations have been beneficial in several ways. They have promoted the use of statistics not only for reviewing progress towards conference goals, but also for designing agency programmes and interventions at country level. In addition, they have generated discussions on data requirements and the needs for improvement in definitions, methods and estimation procedures. Moreover, as a result of the increased demand for indicators and for their dissemination, problems with respect to coverage, reliability, intertemporal and intercountry comparability of the statistical series have been exposed. Two major problems with international compilations — gaps and inconsistencies among indicators[17] — are discussed in the present section. Some ways to address these problems are suggested in section IV.

1. Gaps

13. Gaps in statistical information at the international level are due to (a) lack of data at the national level, (b) non-response by countries or (c) absence of a systematic international effort to compile indicators and statistics on specific topics, which may exist at the country level. Non-response is no doubt a function of the reporting burden put on countries, with

over 100 questionnaires being sent to each country (see para. 7 above).[18] An analysis of the international database of the United Nations Statistics Division in 1998 concluded that for 66 United Nations member countries official national data on gross domestic product (GDP) and its standard breakdown had not been available for any year since 1992. Only 82 of the 185 States Members of the United Nations reported the full set of major macroeconomic aggregates in the last five years.[19] This is despite the fact that economic statistics, and in particular national accounts, are well-established statistical areas, with internationally agreed upon standards and methodologies and with a history of data collection. Similar problems exist in the area of demographic statistics.

14. Another example concerns adult literacy. A look at the UNESCO 1998 *Statistical Yearbook* reveals that, out of 164 countries and territories covered, the only data available for some 55 developing countries are either estimates or data referring to 1985 or earlier.[20] An assessment of availability of data on 12 socio-economic indicators (included in the MNSDS) showed other examples of serious gaps in some indicators and paucity of recent data for even the traditional topics, for example, life expectancy and employment-population ratio (see annex VIII), where a systematic process of data collection has long been established.

15. The gaps are even more serious for areas where there are no established mechanisms for collecting data from countries, such as average number of years of schooling completed, monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirement, and household income per capita (level and distribution). Other examples are primarily for "new" policy issues for which there are no agreed concepts and measurements, as is the case for governance, violence against women and unremunerated work. However, even for those issues that have been discussed for some time (for example, the informal sector, poverty, and the environment), definition and measurement problems persist.

2. Inconsistencies among indicators

16. There are overlaps in the international organizations' work on indicators, which result in duplications either in the collection of data from countries or in the dissemination of the indicators. There are obviously degrees of seriousness with regard to duplication — duplication in the dissemination of data may well be justified to make them as widely available as possible or inasmuch as two distinct international organizations look at similar phenomena from different angles.[21] Equally, parallel efforts in the selection and definition of new indicators, for example, in the field of the environment, may lead under certain circumstances to stimulating debate within the United Nations system, and to more relevant and widely acceptable sets. On the other hand, duplications in the collection and processing of basic data can hardly be justified. These not only lead to inconsistencies in published data and confuse the audiences, but also cause distortions in national resources and overtax countries needlessly.

17. Annex IX presents illustrative examples of inconsistencies in indicators provided by different international organizations. There are several reasons for which seemingly identical indicators appear with different numerical values in international publications:

(a) *Indicators may in fact reflect distinct phenomena* even though they seem to be the same. An example is per capita GDP in United States dollars. The market exchange rate-based indicator and the "purchasing power parity" (PPP)-based indicator serve two different purposes. Careful labelling of the indicators in question helps to avoid confusion or misinterpretation;

(b) *Different definitions may be applied to the same indicator:* for example, access to safe drinking water is an important health indicator, but there is as yet no single or commonly agreed definition for "access". In some cases, the criterion used is walking distance from household to the water source; in others it is time required to go from household to the water source;[22]

(c) *Data discrepancies may have been inherited from the national* level where there are inconsistent national sources. Different international organizations tend to have different contacts at the national level from which data are obtained, as is sometimes the case with national accounts figures which could come from the national statistical office or from the central bank;

(d) *Different compilation or estimation techniques are used at the international level*: international organizations often make their own estimates of country indicators, because the base information is either simply not available, or not available in sufficient detail (for example, in respect of country coverage, periodicity) or because it needs to be standardized to ensure international comparability or to derive regional and global aggregates;

(e) *Base data may come from different points in time of the processing cycle*: the country data may refer to provisional estimates or final estimates for a given reference period, depending on when the international organization requested the country data.

II. Situation at country level

18. The ability of countries to meet the challenges of development, reflected in increasing and/or changing demands for indicators, depends most crucially on the existence of basic data collected through a well-established national statistical system. Many countries have difficulties in meeting the demands for statistics emanating both from within their countries and from outside even without the extra demands placed upon them by the resolutions of conferences. Although international organizations have long supported data-collection activities at country level, problems of quality, recency and availability of data persist.

A. Capacity of countries to produce indicators

19. The extent to which countries have responded to the demand pressures has depended very much on the degree to which the three major sources of data — (a) censuses, (b) sample surveys, and (c) administrative records — have been developed. As regards these three major sources:

(a) The population *census* is the most common source of information on the size of the population and its geographical distribution, as well as basic characteristics such as age, marital status and educational attainment. Yet, not all countries are able to conduct a census at the desirable interval of every ten years.[23] As many as 35 countries and areas did not conduct a census in the 1990 round of censuses (that is to say, during the period 1985–1994) and 19 countries have still not indicated any date for the 2000 round (1995–2004);[24]

(b) In addition to population censuses, national *sample surveys* are indispensable for collecting information on economic, demographic, social and a variety of other issues. Many developing countries conduct such surveys as an integral part of their national statistics programmes. Improvement is often required, however, with respect to coverage

of topics, relevance of concepts and definitions, coverage of specific groups and timely dissemination of results. For some surveys, for example, household sample surveys, developing countries frequently depend on external support. Consequently, the timing of the surveys and the coverage of issues may not respond adequately to the data needs for development planning in general, or specifically for the follow-up to the conferences. Moreover, some issues require surveys that are conducted at shorter intervals than many countries are currently able to support. For example, in order to capture the seasonality and intermittence of economic activities in predominantly agricultural economies, at least quarterly labour-force surveys are needed;

(c) *Administrative records*, such as civil registration, education and employment registers, require substantial improvements in many countries in order to become a viable source of information. Civil registration, as the main source of data for indicators like maternal mortality, infant mortality, child mortality and fertility rate, is still weak in many of the developing countries and almost entirely lacking outside urban areas. In 46 out of 184 reporting countries registration covers less than 90 per cent of total births and in 45 out of 179 reporting countries, it covers less than 90 per cent of total deaths.[25] When they are developed, administrative registers can provide, on at least an annual basis, information on vital statistics and on statistics in sectors such as education, health and labour, and for topics such as migration, refugees and enterprise development.

20. The major problems of national data can be summarized in relation to (a) availability of data, (b) comprehensiveness of coverage with respect to geographical areas or population sub-groups, (c) relevance of concepts and methods of data collection, (d) timeliness of data, (e) comparability of different sources and (f) accessibility of the data. These factors may be described as follows:

(a) *Availability of data* relates to the coverage of topics and issues within the statistical system and the years for which basic data are available. Data availability is often determined by both financial and historical factors. In general, since statistical activities are often inadequately funded, even in developed countries but particularly in developing countries, statistical systems rationalize resource constraints by limiting the number of issues covered and the frequency of data-collection exercises. The coverage is limited in some cases to topics for which there is either national experience or international standards and recommendations which facilitate data collection, or for which external support is available. There are also situations where the demand for data on specific topics (for example, poverty, social exclusion, violence against women, environment) is relatively new and either there is limited experience on how data are to be collected or relevant concepts and methods have been neither developed nor adequately tested;

(b) *Comprehensiveness of coverage* is most relevant to the data obtained from vital and civil registers, and administrative records, which do not as yet provide complete geographical coverage in many countries. In addition, sample surveys and qualitative studies, such as the rapid assessment approach, are common sources for data on a large number of economic, social and demographic issues; but they are not always large enough to provide reliable estimates on indicators for smaller population groups, such as indigenous populations, or on characteristics such as disability that affect a very small proportion of the population;

(c) *Relevance of concepts and methods*: international standards on concepts and methods need to be tested and adapted to national circumstances so as to avoid biased estimates. For example, since women's economic activities in many developing countries tend to be seasonal or intermittent and many are in unpaid employment, enumerators need to be specially trained to capture women's participation;

(d) *Timeliness of data* relates to the time-span between the actual data collection and the release of the results. This issue is more pertinent to some indicators than to others. Whereas structural indicators such as the adult literacy rate change only slowly over time, other indicators, for example, GDP and food production, may change rapidly and therefore need to be measured frequently in order to remain relevant;

(e) *Comparability of different sources* is a problem when different sources are combined. Better coordination between producers of data at the national level can ensure that comparable concepts are adopted. When different sources are combined, users need to be alerted to the differences and their implications;

(f) *Accessibility to the data*: existing data are generally not fully utilized. Underutilization of data is due to the fact on one hand that users are not made aware of the full range of data available, including published and non-published forms of the data, and on the other hand that data are not presented in the formats that users need.

B. Impact of international actions at country level

21. For at least the past three decades, international organizations and bilateral donors have provided support to countries to improve the availability and quality of data. Programmes of support from organizations can be classified into two types: (a) internationally generated and standardized packages for the collection of data on specific topics and (b) assistance aimed at strengthening the data-collection capacity of a country or targeting a specific data-collection effort within a country's regular statistical programme.

22. The first category includes: the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), a successor to the World Fertility Survey (WFS); the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS); the Multiple-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS);[26] and the International Comparison Programme (ICP). Technical and financial support have been provided to ensure implementation of these programmes. Although the programmes may include a capacity-building component, the primary objective is to generate data on the specific topic. Assistance is therefore often outside the regular programme of data collection already existing in the country. Although not a data-collection exercise, the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) is also included here as an internationally initiated programme that seeks to improve the dissemination of national data. These activities are described in more detail in annex X.

23. The second category includes the financial support that international organizations give to countries in direct response to their request. The support often aims at assisting countries in collecting data through one or more of the following means: a population census; specific types of household surveys; enterprise surveys; civil and vital registration; and other administrative sources. Many international agencies and organizations support developing countries in respect of their gathering the requisite baseline data needed for planning and monitoring development programmes, and building national capacity to produce the necessary data regularly.

24. In addition to the financial support given to countries, several specialized agencies and the United Nations Secretariat provide technical guidance through handbooks and manuals. The purpose of these technical documents is to disseminate information on the concepts, definitions and methods of collecting and analysing data on different topics. Further technical support is provided through training workshops and direct technical cooperation programmes.

25. The international actions described above have certainly had a positive impact on the national statistical systems, increasing the availability of data on selected topics and building in some instances national statistical capacity. However, the resources and orientation of assistance programmes have not always matched the internal needs of and the external demands placed on countries. As long as the interests of international organizations coincide with national policy priorities, national data needs are met; but in cases where these interests and national priorities diverge, there is a serious danger that scarce human resources will be diverted to areas of statistical activity of lower country priority.

26. In general, there needs to be more emphasis placed on building the capacity of countries related to all stages of the information process, ranging from data collection to the analysis and dissemination of statistics and indicators. Capacity is not built when data are processed and analysed outside the country or when the official statistical apparatus is not involved in the data collection. This may occur when, as a result of an open bidding process, institutions outside of the official statistical system are awarded the data-collection contracts.

27. Discrepancies between statistics and indicators from national sources and those from international sources are another issue of concern. For example, an international agency estimated that, in a country, 51 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line. In contrast, according to a published government source, based on a national survey the figure for the same indicator was 20 per cent. Such discrepancies may result when organizations collect their own data at country level or make adjustments to basic data provided by countries or make their own estimates based on certain models. While the need for adjusted international data series is widely recognized, confusion can arise for users of the data when the distinction between adjusted data and underlying data is not made clear. Furthermore, discrepancies in published data which are significant and yet remain unexplained undermine the credibility of national statistics. Agreements on international standards for the definition and measurement of indicators, clear labelling and data source notes can help.

28. Indicator series developed for cross-national comparison sometimes use indirect or model-based estimates to fill in gaps in the underlying data. On the one hand, this is frequently the best that can be done to obtain a consistent cross-national overview; on the other hand, it is always a poor substitute for having good data to begin with. Moreover, as countries are aware that international estimates are being produced and because of the widespread perception of internationally disseminated statistics being more reliable, this may in some cases create a disincentive for countries to report data or to undertake further efforts to improve their data collection.

Box 2
Statement of the main problems discussed in sections I and II

The main problems discussed in sections I and II may be stated as follows:

- *Lack of basic data*: In too many countries, basic information, in particular for "newer" areas of policy concerns (for example, environment, gender, poverty), is not available;

- *Proliferation of indicators*: The sheer volume of development indicators and the lack of information on how similar indicators are related often make it difficult and confusing for analysts and decision makers to use them;

- *Overburdening of national statistical systems*: Competing demands and the proliferation of internationally formulated indicator sets increase the reporting burden on national statistical agencies;

- *Ad hoc data-collection efforts by some organizations to meet their own information needs*: These efforts crowd out limited financial and human resources and thus interfere with regular national statistical programmes;

- *Inconsistencies among indicators*: The fact that, even when seemingly identical indicators are being referred to, differences can exist in the definition and underlying concepts, in the use of data sources, in the compilation method, in the periodicity and so forth, which lead to different numerical values;

- *Integrity of indicators*: Sources, definitions and compilation/estimation methods are not always made explicit. The lack of adequate referencing and of technical notes deprives the user of the ability to make an informed quality assessment.

III. Means of implementation

29. The conferences during the 1990s set a large number of goals to be achieved over the coming years. The previous sections of this report have focused on the indicators to measure progress towards these goals and in this context have analysed the statistical capacity of developing countries. At the same time, conferences nonetheless recognized that achieving these goals required the promotion of a favourable national and international environment. They recognized that ultimately each country bears primary responsibility for its own economic and social development. Notwithstanding the importance of domestic policies, however, the conferences underscored the importance of a favourable international economic environment and of international cooperation for achieving conference goals.

30. In this respect, developed countries at conferences pledged to support developing countries' efforts to achieve conference goals. The type of support pledged went beyond mere technical and financial cooperation to include working towards trade liberalization, enhanced financial stability and improved cooperation in the formulation of macroeconomic

policies. The extent to which these support commitments are being met is also in need of review.

31. Monitoring progress towards promoting a national and international environment supportive of conference goals goes beyond the scope of this report, and is addressed in other reports before the Economic and Social Council, notably the *World Economic and Social Survey*. The present section highlights a few issues related to the monitoring of commitments by developed countries in the area of resources.

32. Considerable financial resources are required to meet the conference goals and initial estimates were made at the time of the conferences.[27] Although it is generally recognized that the most important contributions for development have to be made by the developing countries themselves, in many countries external resources are needed. The 1998 OECD/DAC report[28] states in this context that "aid targeted on countries most in need, focused on agreed development objectives, and provided in a context of improving local efforts and policies can make the difference between meeting and failing to reach agreed development goals".

33. Although more work needs to be done to monitor the resources being devoted to the achievement of the goals, initial analysis by the OECD/DAC has shown that, while more aid has been targeted to the social sectors, the share of aid going to the countries furthest away from the goals has declined slightly (even within a declining aid volume), making achievement of the goals even harder.

34. The most direct indicator of aid flows is the share of official development assistance (ODA) provided by a donor country as a percentage of its gross national product (GNP), for which the United Nations has set a target of 0.7 per cent. This indicator is monitored routinely by OECD/DAC. Only four bilateral donors meet this target and it is of great concern that ODA has been declining continuously for over five years.[29] ODA fell to 0.22 per cent of the combined GNP of DAC member countries in 1997, the lowest percentage ever. Cuts in aid budgets of some of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries, in particular, contributed to that decline. Although foreign direct investments have been on the increase, they fluctuate considerably and in any case affect only marginally the poorest countries and do not contribute significantly to essential investments in social development or the environment. Also, these investments do not serve general institutional improvements, such as for instance the statistical capacity of a country. In addition to the reduction in ODA, debt servicing continues in many poor countries to reduce the availability of domestic resources for conference implementation, despite the various initiatives taken to address the problems of external indebtedness of developing countries.

35. Another more qualitative indicator of donor commitment is the allocation of increasingly scarce aid resources to poverty reduction and to the provision of essential health and education services (see box 3). DAC — through its system of recording aid flows by both bilateral and multilateral donors — has undertaken to do more work on relating aid and other resource inputs to the achievement of conference outcomes and to report on this regularly.

Box 3
The 20/20 initiative

The 20/20 initiative calls on Governments and donors to allocate at least 20 per cent of public spending and official development assistance (ODA), respectively, to basic social services (basic education and primary health care, including reproductive health and population programmes, nutrition programmes, and safe drinking water and sanitation). Statistics for some 30 countries showed that Governments allocate on average 12–14 per cent to basic social services, which is below what is needed to reach universal coverage of basic social services in the next 10–15 years. The donor share was estimated to be 15 per cent.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), there is a trend towards better targeting of aid resources in regard to addressing internationally agreed development goals. However, most donors need to drastically increase — double according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — the share of their resources going to basic social services. The 20/20 initiative should also help Governments to enhance the share of domestic resources allocated to basic social services. The Hanoi meeting on the 20/20 initiative called upon Governments to reform their budget processes to ensure that basic social services receive high priority.

Data-collection and reporting systems on the initiative need to be further improved, both at the country level and from the donor side.[a] At this stage, for instance, data on sectoral allocation of multilateral aid are available only for the World Bank and regional development banks, and not for other United Nations organizations (although some provide estimates in this respect), according to OECD/DAC.

[a] Hanoi meeting on the 20/20 initiative, 27–29 October 1998, draft report.

36. Monitoring the resources going into the implementation of specific major conferences is notoriously difficult. A partial effort has been undertaken by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to monitor the flow of resources allocated to the four areas of population, which were costed in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development[30] (see box 4). As regards Agenda 21,[31] the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat reviews the share of ODA allocated to the main areas thereof, based on OECD/DAC data. In addition, the recently approved questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action[32] aims at the collection of information on the percentage of the overall budget allocated for women-specific policies/programmes.

Box 4
Monitoring of financial resources for assisting the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

At the request of the Commission on Population and Development, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) monitors external assistance for population activities. It also evaluates domestic resource flows originating from Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, through a constantly improving data system developed in collaboration with a Netherlands non-governmental organization.

The evaluations made for the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development reveal that international assistance for population and reproductive health increased by 54 per cent from the pre-Conference period, to slightly over $2 billion in 1996, which represents roughly 35 per cent of the target agreed at Cairo for international assistance. The figure then declined to $1.9 billion in 1997.

Domestic financial resources from Governments and non-governmental organizations are estimated to have been about $7 billion annually during the period 1996–1997, and an additional $1 billion is estimated to have been provided by individuals and households.

37. Other recent initiatives by developed countries include working for greater consistency among development cooperation, trade and investment policies. At their 1998 meeting, OECD ministers called for "a report in 1999 on the links between trade and investment and development, and the role that the OECD might play in promoting greater policy coherence" (Ministerial Statement). This would help to meet the call made by the Economic and Social Council in 1997 for greater coherence between macroeconomic, trade, financial and development policies, in particular to maximize the impact of development cooperation.[33]

38. Finally, it should be noted that trends in public expenditure (social, environmental), gross domestic savings, ODA and other external financial sources, as well as efforts to solve external indebtedness of the poorer countries and broader aspects of macroeconomic and financial policies, are monitored as broad indicators of the economic and financial enabling environment for implementing conference goals.

IV. Possible next steps

39. A genuine commitment of all concerned parties at the national as well as the international level is needed to ensure a routine flow of reliable statistics and indicators at the country level, which meets national needs for information, and for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences and summits. In this regard, a practical and incremental approach which builds upon existing mechanisms is needed. Four main areas are presented for consideration:

(a) *Building national statistical capacity in basic data collection and dissemination of indicators*:

(i) A programmatic approach is needed so that the international community and national Governments work closely together in strengthening the physical infrastructure and human resources capabilities, based on medium-term statistical development strategies, which have been formulated in accordance with national policy.[34] With regard to improving the availability of data, the census remains the most comprehensive form of basic data collection. International organizations and bilateral donors have provided extensive support to countries' censuses in the past. This needs to be continued and expanded;

(ii) In addition, a targeted international programme to build capacity should include sample surveys. It could build on experiences gained, for example, through the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), which was implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division and supported by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank (see annex X). Such a programme would seek to build upon existing programmes of assistance and establish operational links between them. Moreover, such a programme would support national human resource development efforts through the provision of handbooks and training in areas such as sample frame design and geographical information systems, questionnaire design, and the analysis and dissemination of results. In order to mobilize the required resources, higher priority needs to be given to statistics and indicators in planning, budgeting and funding of programmes. This requires a concerted effort to increase awareness among policy makers at both the national and the international level as to the importance of relevant, sound and up-to-date statistics;

(b) *Convening a "high level" group of major funding agencies and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat*, including possibly some bilateral donors involved in general statistical capacity-building, to coordinate and harmonize support for data-collection and capacity-building exercises in countries. In order to build statistical capacity on a long-term basis, support needs to be pooled and based on a comprehensive needs assessment. The group would ensure that activities and funding programmes of the agencies were synergistic with each other. The work of such a group would be facilitated if all major funding agencies had clearly identified high-level focal points for statistical development, whose function it was to coordinate and harmonize statistical activities and projects within the agency;

(c) *Strengthening existing mechanisms for coordinating indicator initiatives among international organizations*, such as ACC and its subsidiary bodies, to eliminate information inconsistencies and gaps at the international level:

(i) The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, supported by an advisory group of country experts, could facilitate the dialogue between organizations to resolve methodological questions and provide guidance for increased transparency[35] on indicators via the provision of metadata.[36] As a first step towards analysing gaps and inconsistencies, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities was invited to give consideration to the request of the Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development that the Statistics Division prepare an inventory of the production and dissemination of the development indicators being used to review the implementation of conference goals.[37] The inventory forms the basis for a United Nations Web site for development indicators which could serve as a road map — for external and internal users — as regards where to find information available in the United Nations system with links to data sources where available. A

prototype of the Web site has been developed based on the United Nations Statistics Division data and indicators from UNESCO, ILO and FAO. The coverage of the Web site needs to be extended to include other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. This would create an effective information centre and would significantly enhance the analytical power of this tool for improved coordination in the production and dissemination of indicators. However, considerable resources will be needed to complete and maintain this extended Web site;

(ii) In order to reduce the burden on countries of multiple questionnaires, a data-collection plan based on the principle of one indicator/one source/one lead organization is needed. This implies that data for each core indicator would be collected only once by one international lead organization and from one pre-specified national source.[38] There exist good examples of common data collection by international organizations and these experiences need to be analysed, shared and applied where possible;

(d) *Developing a system of indicator sets*:

(i) The centrepiece of this system should be a basic core set that satisfies key requirements of national and international information demands. The core set may be augmented by specific national, regional or sectoral indicators in accordance with the particular needs of the user(s) and with the capabilities of the data providers. The core set would have to be defined and updated in a broad-based consultative process. A forum with combined inter-agency and intergovernmental representation (for example, the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities plus the Bureau of the Statistical Commission) could be considered the appropriate body to manage the updating process. It is crucial that national users and producers of information also be fully consulted at all stages. As a general principle, whenever new indicators are proposed at the international level, it should be required that a strong case would need to be made, presenting evidence, for the relevance of the newly proposed indicator and analysing the costs associated with collecting the necessary data. There should also be a regular examination to determine whether the dissemination of any existing indicators and the associated data-collection processes could be eliminated;

(ii) It may be necessary to employ a thematic approach within the core in order to focus the discussion on areas such as environment, health and education, or cross-cutting issues such as gender and poverty. The present indicator framework contained in the CCA guidelines (see para. 10), which is harmonized with the OECD/United Nations/World Bank indicators, provides a good starting point for the development of such a core set.[39] Once such a core set has been defined, clear guidance on standard definitions, on data-collection or estimation methods, and on the dissemination and use of the indicators is indispensable. Where weaknesses or gaps are identified in the core set of indicators, for example, in specific countries, these should be addressed through the programme(s) referred to in paragraph 39 (a).

40. The Economic and Social Council is the only forum where all concerned parties can come together, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other international stakeholders, such as OECD. The Council may therefore wish to request periodic briefings on progress in the following areas: (a) eliminating indicator inconsistencies, (b) filling information gaps, (c) developing a core set of indicators and (d) building national statistical capacity. In addition, the Council could encourage both the efforts of OECD/DAC to monitor the share of aid allocated to conference objectives and the collaboration of United Nations system organizations in these efforts.

Notes

[1] While there are technical differences between statistics and indicators, the two are intrinsically linked and therefore for the purpose of the present report the terms are used interchangeably.

[2] A list of major conferences and summits is contained in annex I to this report.

[3] The following are some examples of explicit numerical targets contained in conference documents: "By the year 2000, provide universal access to basic education and ensure completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children" (Beijing Platform for Action (*Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II) para. 80 (b)); "Countries should strive to reduce their infant and under-5 mortality rates by one third ... by the year 2000", and "By 2015, all countries should aim to achieve an infant mortality rate below 35 per 1,000 live births" (*Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex), para. 8.16).

[4] See, for example, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, (*Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I), sect. C, commitment 9 (d); and Beijing Platform for Action, strategic objective H.3 (para. 206).

[5] As noted in the summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council, "In order to effectively monitor progress in the implementation of conferences at the country level, there is an urgent need for the multilateral system to develop a coherent set of basic indicators, as well as a need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system and of countries to collect and analyse statistics" (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3 and Add.1 and Corr.1), chap. III, para. 23, sect. VI).

[6] See Economic and Social Council decision 1998/298 of 31 July 1998, para. (e).

[7] A more detailed presentation of the criteria to be applied in the selection and dissemination of indicators is provided in annex III.

[8] International organizations sometimes produce estimates and projections by using statistical models. Examples are population estimates calculated by the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat, estimates and projections of the labour force prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the average years of schooling calculated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

[9] United Nations Statistics Division, "Inventory of Statistical Data-collection Activities", 1995.

[10] For example, at the international level the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat has for decades produced estimates of life expectancy at birth, infant mortality and, more recently, child mortality.

[11] For example, the ILO programme on Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), WHO task force indicators on reproductive health, the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the integrated follow-up to conferences, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) work on poverty indicators and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) programme for updating of *Statistical Indicators for Asia and the Pacific*.

[12] Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998.

[13] Social Statistics and Indicators, No. 8 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3).

[14] Social Statistics and Indicators, No. 12 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2 and Corr.1).

[15] See, for example, the report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1)) where the Council urged the consideration of gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to global United Nations conferences.

[16] These three indicators were found not to be compiled at the international level. See the report of the Secretary-General on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system (E/CN.3/1999/14), para. 7.

[17] See also T. N. Srinivasan, "Data base for development analysis: an overview", *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 44 (1994), pp. 3–27; and W. P. Mauldin, "Maternal mortality in developing countries:

comparison of rates from two international compendia", *Population and Development Review*, vol. 20, No. 2 (1994), pp. 413–421.

[18] Many countries have stated that the burden of reporting is great. For example, two developed countries have specified that one full-time member of staff is assigned the task of simply coordinating the reporting of statistics to international organizations. Additional staff time has to be allocated to completing the questionnaires.

[19] See report of the Secretary-General on the milestone assessment of the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993, by Member States (E/CN.3/1999/3), presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session, 1–5 March 1999.

[20] Paris, UNESCO, 1998.

[21] United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), "Review of United Nations Social 'Flagship' Reports", para. 34, 1997.

[22] World Health Organization and others, *Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Monitoring Report 1996*, sector status as of 31 December 1994 (WHO/EOS/96.15).

[23] As recommended in *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses Revision 1*, Statistical Papers, No. 67/Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8).

[24] Progress report of the Secretary-General on demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9).

[25] Commission on Population and Development, "World population monitoring, 1999: population growth, structure and distribution" (ESA/P/WP.147), working paper available at the thirty-second session of the Commission, 22–24 March 1999.

[26] Rather than do a separate survey, 40 out of the 100 countries in which MICS were carried out at mid-decade included a module of the additional questions required in existing household surveys.

[27] For example, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development estimated an average annual cost for implementation between 1993 and 2000 at over $600 billion, including $125 billion from the international community. The International Conference on Population and Development estimated that, in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the implementation of integrated population and reproductive health programmes would cost $17.0 billion in 2000 and increase to $21.7 billion in 2015. At the World Summit for Children, the cost was estimated in 1990 at about $20 billion. The World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) did not cost their programmes of action.

[28] Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee, 1998 Report on Development Cooperation (Paris, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998).

[29] The cumulative decline of ODA (at constant prices and exchange rates) has, from 1992 to the present, reached almost 25 per cent.

[30] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[31] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolution Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[32] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[33] Agreed conclusions 1997/1 of the Economic and Social Council on "Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows, investment and trade" (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. II, para. 5).

[34] See note by the Secretariat on some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics (E/CN.3/1999/19), recently adopted by the Statistical Commission, 1999.

[35] Transparency would include feedback from international organizations to data providers on the use and interpretation of their basic data.

[36] See, for example, United Nations Statistics Division, "Common Code for Statistical Practices in the United Nations System", April 1996.

[37] See the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-second session (New York, 16–18 June 1998) (ACC/1998/14), para. 2 (a), for further details. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs endorsed the proposal of a Website at its 10th meeting (New York, 16 May 1998).

[38] Data collection from one national source could only be ensured if a national coordinating mechanism was in place (see also para. 20 (e) of the present report).

[39] This model for collaboration also fits into the recently proposed "Comprehensive Development Framework" of the World Bank.

Annex I

List of selected global conferences, conventions and declarations

International conference	*Year*	*Host city*
World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs	1990	**Jomtien**
World Summit for Children	1990	**New York**
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	1992	**Rio de Janeiro**
International Conference on Nutrition	1992	**Rome**
World Conference on Human Rights	1993	**Vienna**
International Conference on Population and Development	1994	**Cairo**
Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States	1994	**Bridgetown**
World Summit for Social Development	1995	**Copenhagen**
Fourth World Conference on Women	1995	**Beijing**
Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders	1995	**Cairo**
United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)	1996	**Istanbul**
World Food Summit	1996	**Rome**
Ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	1996	**Midrand**
First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth	1998	**Lisbon**
Special session of the General Assembly devoted to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and related activities	1998	**New York**

International Convention or Declaration	*Year*
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948
Declaration of the Rights of the Child	1959
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1965
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966
Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons	1975
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	1979
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984
Declaration on the Right to Development	1986
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989
Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities	1992

Annex II

Expert Group Meeting on Development Indicators
New York, 8–10 March 1999

List of participants

Name	*Title*	*Country/organization*
Ms. Leisa Perch	Environment Division Ministry of Environment, Energy and Natural Resources	Barbados
Ms. Waltraud Moore	Head, Department of Inter- and Supernational Cooperation, Federal Statistical Office	Germany
Mr. M. D. Asthana	Secretary, Department of Statistics	India
Mr. Gary Jones	Department of International Relations, Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT)	Italy
Mr. Gabriele Quinti	Director for Plan of Action, Gruppo, European Consortium for the Learning Organization (CERFE)	Italy
Mr. Mahamadou Tangara	Observatoire du Développement humain durable — Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement (DHD-PNUD)	Mali
Ms. Maria Lourdes Lagarde	Assistant Director, Agriculture Staff, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and Assistant Head Coordinating Secretariat, Philippine Council for Sustainable Development	Philippines
Mr. Paul Cheung	Chief, Statistician Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry	Singapore
Mr. Ilija Batljan	First Secretary, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs	Sweden
Mr. E. S. K. Muwanga-Zake	Deputy Director, Trade and External Debt Department	Uganda
Mr. Tony Williams	Chief Statistician, Department for International Development	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Professor Marc L. Miringoff	Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy, Fordham Graduate Center	United States of America
Mr. D. W. M. Mzumara	Team Leader, Statistical Development, Development Information Services Division	Economic Commission for Africa
Mr. Andrew Flatt	Director, Statistics Division	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Name	*Title*	*Country/organization*
Mr. Labeeb Abdunnur	Chief, Statistics Division	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Mr. Ladislav Kabat	Director, Statistics Division	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Mr. Jean-Etienne Chapron	Statistics Department	International Monetary Fund
Mr. Brian Hammond	Head, Reporting Systems Division, Development Cooperation Directorate	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Mr. Eric Swanson	Leader, World Development Indicators, Senior Economist Development Data Group	World Bank
Mr. Terry McKinley	Human Development Economist	United Nations Development Programme
Ms. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr	Director, Human Development Report	United Nations Development Programme
Ms. Denise Lievesley	Director, UNESCO Institute for Statistics	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Mr. Richard Leete	Manager, Data System including Indicator Theme Group, Technical and Policy Division	United Nations Population Fund
Mr Gareth Jones	Chief, Information and Data Management	United Nations Children's Fund

Staff of the United Nations Statistics Division and other divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs also participated.

Annex III

Selection and dissemination of indicators

There have been several attempts at defining an indicator, but there is as yet no single, widely applied definition. The following is a selection of the different attempts at defining indicators:

"Indicators reflect or represent complex concepts or conditions. They are statistics or other forms of evidence which attempt to make sense of uncertainty or the unknown by extracting simple ideas out of complex ones" (McCracken and Scott, 1998; from Innes, 1990: 291). Social indicators have been described as "statistical series, and all forms of evidence ... that enable us to assess where we stand and where we are going with respect to values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact" (Bauer, 1966, quoted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 1996). They are "tools to clarify and define more precisely the objectives and impact ... are verifiable measures of changes or results ... are designed to provide a standard against which to gauge, estimate, or demonstrate the progress ... against stated targets, towards delivering ... inputs, producing ... outputs and achieving ... objectives" (United Nations, 1989; p. 18). They provide a close look at the results of initiatives and actions (CIDA, 1996: p. 5).

From the above definitions, a number of common elements can be identified, which help to determine what an indicator is: a statistic, a fact (quantitative) or encompassing forms of evidence, perception (qualitative); defined for some purpose, such as to assess, evaluate, measure, convey a message; reflect some underlying goal, values, conditions, message and so on.

Types and selection of indicators

There are several ways in which indicators have been categorized. They are distinguished as quantitative or qualitative; direct or indirect; simple or composite; input, process or performance, or outcome indicators; driving force, state or response indicators and so forth.

Since indicators have a more specific purpose than other forms of statistical and qualitative information, there is a need to be selective about which information is to be presented. According to CIDA (1996), for an indicator to be chosen, it should meet the tests of "reliability" and "validity" (p. 10). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggests that good indicators should be: policy-relevant; user-friendly, derived from a framework, technically sound (that is to say, valid, reliable and comparable); and feasible in terms of measurement at reasonable cost (1997, p. 3). The World Health Organization (WHO) states that the selection of an indicator should assure its relevance in terms of validity, objectivity, specificity, and sensitivity (1996, p. viii).

The identification and selection of each indicator are critical steps in its production, and are generally guided by certain principles, that is to say, the indicator should be:

- *Policy-relevant*: capable of providing clear and unambiguous responses to key policy issues and concerns;
- *Specific*: have the capacity to measure only the phenomena for which it has been selected, and be definite in terms of magnitude and time;

- *Valid*: able to actually measure what it has been chosen to measure, that is to say, close to the reality being measured;
- *Reliable*: accurate and consistent, able to express the same message or yield the same conclusions if the measurement is carried out with different tools, by different people, in similar circumstances;
- *Sensitive*: have the capacity to measure changes in the phenomena that it is intended to measure;
- *Measurable*: based on available data or feasible with respect to obtaining the required data;
- *User-friendly*: comprehensible, timely (should be few in number);
- *Cost-effective*: the results should be worth the time and money it costs to implement them.

An appropriate use of data for the development of a full range of indicators also requires a clear dissemination policy which carefully considers issues such as timeliness, frequency of compilation and provision of information on the quality of an indicator. These issues are crucial in building the indispensable confidence of users of indicators, and may be further described as follows:

(a) The frequency of compilation of an indicator is determined by (i) the periodicity of the collection of the data source; (ii) the time needed to process the information; and (iii) the estimated rate at which the phenomenon changes;

(b) The time lag between collection and dissemination should be relatively short, particularly if the phenomenon to be observed changes very quickly; otherwise the indicator may lose its relevance for monitoring;

(c) Availability of "metadata", that is to say, notes on methodology and sources, are necessary for users, in particular policy makers, to assess the quality and relevance of indicators.

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Annex IV

Number of international data-collection activities by organization

International agency/organization/department	*Number of requests sent to countries*
Worldwide coverage	
United Nations Statistics Division	12
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	7
International Labour Organization	4
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	42
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	12
International Civil Aviation Organization	13
World Health Organization	2
International Monetary Fund	4
International Telecommunication Union	3
World Intellectual Property Organization	11
World Tourism Organization	2
World Trade Organization	5
Total	**117**
Regional or limited coverage	
Economic Commission for Europe	63
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	5
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	4
Economic Commission for Africa	3
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	3
Commonwealth of Independent States	1
Statistical Office of the European Communities	82
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	34
Total	**195**

Source: United Nations Statistics Division, "Inventory of Statistical Data-collection Activities", 1995.

Annex V

Selected indicator activities linked to the follow-up of specific conferences[a]

Conference	*Organization*	*Activities*	*Number of indicators*	*Medium of data dissemination*	*More information*
Health for All	World Health Organization (WHO)	To assist countries in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of strategies for Health for All (HFA), a Common Framework is provided as a tool to ensure coverage of health and health-related areas such as socio-economic and development trends, development of health systems, health care, health resources, patterns and trend in health status, environmental factors and other relevant aspects of health systems development and management. A minimum set of indicators to guide the monitoring is incorporated in the Framework and Member States committed themselves to report these data to WHO. Seventy-four indicators have been selected for the third evaluation of the HFA strategy, of which 12 are specific to the HFA exercise, whereas the others are taken from other agencies. The concepts and the presentation of these indicators are in the process of being reviewed.	74	*Report of the World Health Situation*	WHO Statistical Information System WHOSIS<www.who.ch/whosis/>
World Summit for Children	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	In 1992, the International Conference on Assistance to African Children adopted a set of 13 Mid-Decade Goals as the moral minimum that all countries needed to achieve by the end of 1995 as stepping stones to the goals for the year 2000. The mid-decade assessment in 1994 used 29 indicators and the end-decade will use 43. Furthermore, in 1994 UNICEF, with other partners, developed a household survey programme to assist countries in collecting relevant data for assessing progress on the mid-decade goals (see also Multiple-Indicator Cluster Surveys in annex X).	43	*The State of the World's Children* (last issue 1999) *The Progress of Nations* (last issue, 1998) Report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256), of 26 July 1996	*Monitoring Progress Towards the Goals of the World Summit for Children* (New York, UNICEF, 1995) Evaluation of Multiple-Indicator Cluster Surveys, UNICEF

Conference	*Organization*	*Activities*	*Number of indicators*	*Medium of data dissemination*	*More information*
International Conference on Population and Development	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Department of Economic and Social Affairs/ Population Division	The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has published a report proposing an indicator framework for use in tracking progress of population and reproductive health programmes, subprogrammes and component projects. The 108 indicators are organized according to three thematic areas of population and development, reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health and advocacy/information, education and communication. The menu of indicators given includes a small number of outcome indicators for monitoring the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development as well as a large selection of process and management indicators for use in programmes designed to implement the International Conference on Population and Development agenda. The report also includes a comprehensive account of the data-collection implications for compiling the various indicators.	108		*Indicators for Population and Reproductive Health Programmes*, (New York, UNFPA, 1998)
		Following the International Conference on Population and Development, the revitalized and enlarged Commission on Population and Development requested the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to coordinate production of the annual *World Population Monitoring* report, as a major activity for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The report includes indicators for which quantitative goals were identified in the Programme of Action, and related statistical and policy information.		*World Population Monitoring* (last issue 1999)	Report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the progress made in achieving the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/CN.9/1999/PC/2).

Conference	*Organization*	*Activities*	*Number of indicators*	*Medium of data dissemination*	*More information*
United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)	Following the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) established a Global Urban Observatory (GUO) to permit comparative international evaluation of progress in meeting the aims of the Habitat Agenda (*Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II), and to provide information on human settlements trends and conditions worldwide. To encourage self-monitoring of progress by Governments, local authorities and their partners, GUO is building a global urban knowledge infrastructure based on networks of local, national and regional urban observatories. The Urban Indicators Programme, which forms part of GUO, distributes guidelines, spreadsheets and other tools to urban observatories focusing, first, on approximately 50 key urban indicators, which were endorsed by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Data for these key indicators and for additional contextual indicators are updated locally and compiled nationally for urban policy and programme purposes. Local and national data sets are transmitted voluntarily to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which maintains an indicators database for regional and global analyses.	50	Global database by United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) *The State of the World's Cities*	http://www.UrbanObservatory.org
Education for All	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	An International Consultative Forum on Education for All, comprising the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank, developed guidelines for countries undertaking an assessment of Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000, based on a set of 18 core indicators. Thirty-eight indicators have been introduced in the Web site.	18	unescostat.unesco.org	*Education for All By The Year 2000 Assessment*, Technical Guidelines, UNESCO CD-ROM (in process)

Conference	*Organization*	*Activities*	*Number of indicators*	*Medium of data dissemination*	*More information*
Fourth World Conference on Women	Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Division for the Advancement of Women	The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which reviews on a regular basis reports prepared by Governments, recommended to Governments to include statistical data in reference to all articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. For the 5-year review in 2000, the Division for the Advancement of Women has prepared a special questionnaire on implementation which includes for reference an annex with development indicators, which are recommended for analysis, provided the data are broken down by sex and age to show any gaps between women and men.		Women in political decision-making, 1997, on-line Directory of national machineries for the advancement of women, 1998, on-line	http://www.un.org/womenwatch/statists/
	Department of Economic and Social Affairs/United Nations Statistics Division	The third issue of *The World's Women* (2000) is being produced as a background document for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". This is a collaborative effort of various United Nations agencies/departments and selected countries.	80 (approximately)	Women's Indicators and Statistics Database (Wistat) *Handbook for Producing National Statistical Reports on Women and Men* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.XVII.10 and Corr.1) 1997	http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/gender/intro.htm

Conference	*Organization*	*Activities*	*Number of indicators*	*Medium of data dissemination*	*More information*
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Division for Sustainable Development	The Commission on Sustainable Development, which was established to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, approved a work programme indicators of sustainable development at its third session in 1995. The objective of the work programme is to make indicators of sustainable development available to decision makers at the national level by the year 2000. The implementation of the work programme resulted in a working list of 134 indicators of sustainable development, a framework for their organization and methodology sheets for each of the indicators. Twenty-two countries from all geographical regions of the world have volunteered to test the indicators over a three-year period in relation to their own national priorities and interests. The revised set of indicators and related methodologies will be presented to the Commission in 2001.	134	*Indicators of Sustainable Development: Framework and Methodologies* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.II.A.16), 1996	http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/isd.htm

[a] In addition to the selection of indicator activities presented here, there are other initiatives such as the Statistical Project as a follow-up to the World Summit on Social Development, Danmarks Statistik, as well as sectoral initiatives, for example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) *World Employment Report 1998–99: Employability in the Global Economy: How Training Matters* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998), prepared as a follow-up to the Summit.

Annex VI
Cross-conference indicator initiatives

Programme name	*Responsible institution/body*	*Purpose*	*Conferences*	*Number of indicators*
Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS)	Statistical Commission	To monitor the major areas of concern addressed by the recent major United Nations conferences. The Statistical Commission also invited users to build on MNSDS to meet national needs and circumstances, and to provide feedback on the implementation and use of the MNSDS.[b]	International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit for Social Development, Fourth World Conference on Women, and United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)	15[a]
Basic Social Services for All	Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), Task Force on Basic Social Services for All	To bring to the attention of a broader audience the goals of recent United Nations conferences in areas relating to basic social services, and to give a concise statistical overview of the range of current national situations and of the progress that will be needed to achieve the goals	International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit for Social Development, Fourth World Conference on Women, and United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)	13[c]
United Nations Development Assistance Framework — common country assessment (UNDAF–CCA)	United Nations inter-agency working group on indicators, representatives from all the member agencies of the United Nations Development Group	To review and analyse the national development situation and identify key issues as a basis for advocacy and policy dialogue.[d] To highlight potential major issues in a country by focusing attention on and measuring progress in specific areas	See list in annex I	40 (conference indicators) 10 (contextual indicators)
International development goals	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations, World Bank	To monitor progress towards a selection of conference goals as presented in *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation* and adjust development strategies as required. To give an integrated world view of human well-being in its economic, social and environmental aspects	World Conference on Education for All, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit for Social Development, Fourth World Conference on Women	21[e] 10 (contextual indicators)

[a] See report of the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4, annex).

[b] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 4* (E/1997/24), para. 67 (b).

[c] Under the auspices of the Task Force, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepared the wall chart on *Basic Social Services for All*, 1997 (ST/ESA/SER.A/160); see also United Nations, "Charting the Progress of Populations" (ESA/P/WP.149), 1998.

[d] United Nations Development Group, "Guidelines, Common Country Assessment", final draft, 31 March 1999, annex A, boxes A (Conference indicators) and C (Contextual indicators). The framework also contains some qualitative indicators on governance and civil and political rights.

[e] OECD, a Working Set of Indicators of Development Progress: http://www.oecd.org/dac/Indicators/htm/list.htm

Annex VII

Union of core indicator sets (Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-United Nations-World Bank, United Nations Development Assistance Framework — common country assessment (UNDAF–CCA),[a] basic social services for all (BSSA))

Topics/indicators	*MNSDS*	*OECD-United Nations-World Bank*	*UNDAF/CCA*	*BSSA*	*Number of countries*[b]
1. Population and population growth					
Estimated population size by age and sex[c]	x				
Total population[d]		x	x	x	145
Total fertility rate		x	x		190
2. Health and mortality					
Life expectancy at birth	x	x	x	x	144
Under-five mortality rate	x	x	x	x	163
Infant mortality rate	x	x	x	x	190
Proportion of the population with access to primary health care services			x	x	79
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) adult prevalence rate			x		145
HIV prevalence in pregnant women aged 15–24[e]		x	x		124
3. Reproductive health					
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	x	x	x	x	140
Contraceptive prevalence rate	x	x	x	x	159
Percentage of births attended by appropriately trained health/skilled personnel		x	x		74
4. Food security and nutrition					
Percentage of household income spent on food			x		
Percentage of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption			x		
Proportion/prevalence of underweight children[f]		x	x	x	86

Topics/indicators	MNSDS	OECD-United Nations-World Bank	UNDAF/CCA	RSSA	Number of countries [a]
5. Education					
Adult literacy rate		x	x	x	164
Net primary enrolment ratio		x	x		102
Percentage reaching grade 5/completion of grade 4		x	x		101
Average number of years of schooling completed [g]	x				
Literacy rate of persons aged 15–24 [h]		x	x		77
6. Gender equality and women's empowerment					
Percentage of seats held by women in national government, including parliament			x		
Percentage of paid employees who are women			x		54
Ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education combined [i]		x	x	x	126
7. Child's health welfare					
Percentage of children one year of age immunized against measles			x		145
Percentage of children aged 10–14 who are employed			x		147
8. Employment					
Unemployment rate	x		x		
Informal sector employment as percentage of total employment			x		
Employment-population ratio [j]	x		x		
9. Income and poverty					
Household income per capita (level and distribution)	x				
Poverty headcount ratio (percentage of population below national poverty line)			x		56
Poverty headcount ratio (percentage below $1 a day)		x	x		59
Poverty gap ratio		x	x		51
Monetary value of the minimum food basket [k]	x				
Poorest fifth's share of national consumption		x	x		74

Topics/indicators	*MNSDS*	*OECD-United Nations-World Bank*	*UNDAF/CCA*	*BSSA*	*Number of countries*[b]
10. Housing and basic household amenities and facilities					
Percentage of population with access to adequate sanitation	x		x	x	78
Percentage of population with access to safe drinking water	x	x	x	x	115
Number of persons per room, excluding bathroom[l]	x		x	x	
11. Environment					
Arable land per capita			x		146
Percentage change in forest land area in the last 10 years			x		143
Percentage of the population that relies on traditional fuels for energy use			x		
Countries with national sustainable development strategies		x			171
Intensity of freshwater use		x			133
Biodiversity: land area protected		x	x		135
Energy efficiency: gross domestic product (GDP) per unit of energy use		x	x		136
Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita)		x	x		176
12. Drug control and crime prevention					
Area under cultivation of coca, opium poppy and cannabis			x		
Number of crimes per 100,000 inhabitants			x		
Prevalence of drug abuse			x		
Seizures of illicit drugs			x		
13. Economics					
Total gross national product (GNP)		x			
GNP or gross domestic product (GDP) per capita[m]	x	x	x		141
External debt (US$) as percentage of GNP		x	x		105
Decadal growth rate of GNP per capita (US$)			x		

Topics/indicators	*MNSDS*	*OECD-United Nations-World Bank*	*UNDAF/CCA*	*BSSA*	*Number of countries*[b]
Investment as percentage of GDP		x			123
Trade as percentage of GDP [n]		x	x		
Aid as percentage of GNP		x			112
Share of foreign direct investment (FDI) in GDP			x		
Percentage of public expenditures on social services			x		

Note: Several of the indicators in this presentation are specified by sex in the different sets. However, classification by sex should be applied to all indicators, where feasible.

[a] United Nations Development Group, "Guidelines: Common Country Assessment", final draft, 31 March 1999, annex A, boxes A (Conference indicators) and C (Contextual indicators). The framework also contains some qualitative indicators on governance and civil and political rights.

[b] Number of countries on the basis of indicators presented either in the UNDP *Human Development Report, 1998* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998) or in the 1997 *World Development Indicators* (World Bank). The source of the number of countries for the Adult Literacy Rate is United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

[c] MNSDS: where appropriate and feasible, by ethnic group.

[d] UNDAF: by age, to identify target groups.

[e] OECD: use Adult rate if data not available; UNDAF: HIV prevalence in pregnant women under age 25 who receive antenatal care in capital cities/major urban areas.

[f] UNDAF: children under age 5 who are underweight, stunted and wasted.

[g] MNSDS: by urban/rural and, where possible, by income class.

[h] OECD: in addition, ratio of literate females to males.

[i] UNDAF: only secondary education.

[j] MNSDS: where appropriate, by formal and informal sector.

[k] MNSDS: food needed for minimum nutritional requirement.

[l] UNDAF: if data are not available, floor area per person.

[m] UNDAF: US dollars and purchasing power parities (PPPs).

[n] UNDAF: share of exports in GDP.

Annex VIII

Availability and recency of data at the international level for selected indicators in the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) [a]

Indicator	*Availability and recency of data*	*Number of countries*					
		Total	*Africa*	*America*	*Asia*	*Europe*	*Oceania*
	Total	195	54	39	48	42	12
Total population	**With data**	**186**	**51**	**37**	**45**	**41**	**12**
	1995 or later	139	27	31	35	38	8
	1990–1994	37	18	5	9	3	2
	1985–1989	10	6	1	1	0	2
	No recent data	**9**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**0**
Population by sex and age	**With data**	**158**	**36**	**35**	**38**	**40**	**9**
	1995 or later	72	10	17	18	26	1
	1990–1994	62	19	14	13	13	3
	1985–1989	24	7	4	7	1	5
	No recent data	**37**	**18**	**4**	**10**	**2**	**3**
Life expectancy at birth	**With data**	**104**	**10**	**24**	**28**	**37**	**5**
	1995 or later	37	3	9	6	19	0
	1990–1994	45	3	10	13	15	4
	1985–1989	22	4	5	9	3	1
	No recent data	**91**	**44**	**15**	**20**	**5**	**7**
Infant mortality rate	**With data**	**93**	**6**	**21**	**23**	**38**	**5**
	1995 or later	57	1	10	9	34	3
	1990–1994	27	3	9	10	4	1
	1985–1989	9	2	2	4	0	1
	No recent data	**102**	**48**	**18**	**25**	**4**	**7**
Child mortality rate	**With data**	**96**	**8**	**25**	**22**	**36**	**5**
	1995 or later	31	2	2	6	20	1
	1990–1994	52	3	19	12	16	2
	1985–1989	13	3	4	4	0	2
	No recent data	**99**	**46**	**14**	**26**	**6**	**7**

Indicator	Availability and recency of data	Number of countries					
		Total	Africa	America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Maternal mortality ratio	**With data**	**78**	**4**	**22**	**15**	**35**	**2**
	1995 or later	27	0	4	5	18	0
	1990–1994	42	2	14	8	16	2
	1985–1989	9	2	4	2	1	0
	No recent data	**117**	**50**	**17**	**33**	**7**	**10**
Contraceptive prevalence, women in union	**With data**	**128**	**40**	**29**	**36**	**17**	**6**
	1995 or later	24	13	6	4	1	0
	1990–1994	75	21	13	26	13	2
	1985–1989	29	6	10	6	3	4
	No recent data	**67**	**14**	**10**	**12**	**25**	**6**
Average number of persons per room	**With data**	**37**	**3**	**11**	**8**	**13**	**2**
	1990–1994	16	2	6	1	6	1
	1980–1989	21	1	5	7	7	1
	No recent data	**158**	**51**	**28**	**40**	**29**	**10**
Percentage with access to safe water	**With data**	**155**	**52**	**34**	**42**	**18**	**9**
	1994–1996	119	39	33	32	9	6
	1986–1993	36	13	1	10	9	3
	No recent data	**40**	**2**	**5**	**6**	**24**	**3**
Percentage with access to sanitation	**With data**	**167**	**51**	**32**	**42**	**32**	**10**
	1994–1996	111	34	30	33	9	5
	1986–1993	56	17	2	9	23	5
	No recent data	**28**	**3**	**7**	**6**	**10**	**2**
Per capita gross domestic product (GDP)	**With data**	**172**	**50**	**39**	**39**	**36**	**8**
	1995 or later	64	8	14	21	20	1
	1990–1994	94	33	22	17	16	6
	1985–1989	14	9	3	1	0	1
	No recent data	**23**	**4**	**0**	**9**	**6**	**4**

Indicator	Availability and recency of data	Number of countries					
		Total	Africa	America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Unemployment rate	**With data**	**87**	**5**	**26**	**17**	**36**	**3**
	1995 or later	60	1	16	12	28	3
	1990–1994	27	4	10	5	8	0
	No recent data	**108**	**49**	**13**	**31**	**6**	**9**
Employment-population ratio, ages 15–64	**With data**	**66**	**3**	**26**	**12**	**23**	**2**
	1995 or later	55	2	19	11	22	1
	1990–1994	9	0	6	1	1	1
	1985–1989	2	1	1	0	0	0
	No recent data	**129**	**51**	**13**	**36**	**19**	**10**

[a] The present table is taken from the report of the Secretary-General on the harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system (E/CN.3/1999/14). It was based mainly on published international sources (specifically, *Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.11), *Demographic Yearbook 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F.98.XIII.1), *Population and Vital Statistics Report: Data Available as of 1 April 1998*, *World Population Monitoring 1998* and *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1997*); and files provided by the International Labour Office, World Health Organization and the Economic Statistics Branch of the United Nations Statistics Division from their respective databases. Given that one of the primary goals for the compilation was to identify gaps and areas requiring greater attention by national and international statistical systems, smoothed, model-based or other estimated data and projections prepared by international organizations were purposely excluded.

Annex IX

Illustrative examples of inconsistencies among indicators in international publications

Population with access to safe water

Country	Source A [a] 1990–1996	Source B [b] 1995
Chile	95	not available
China	67	90
Mali	66	36
Mozambique	63	32
Nepal	63	48
Senegal	63	50
Trinidad and Tobago	97	82
Uganda	56	34

[a] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World's Children, 1998* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998).

[b] World Health Organization (WHO), *The World Health Report, 1996: Fighting Disease, Fostering Development* (Geneva, WHO, 1996); WHO expanded programme of immunization information system; WHO and others, *Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Monitoring Report 1996*.

Total population, 1996

(Millions)

Country	Source A [a]	Source B [b] Mid-year
Bangladesh	127	120.073
Egypt	59	63.271
Eritrea	4	3.280
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	63	69.975
Pakistan	134	139.973
Philippines	72	69.282
Rwanda	7	5.397
South Africa	38	42.393

[a] World Bank, *1998 World Development Indicators*.

[b] *World Population Monitoring, 1997: International Migration and Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XIII.4).

Percentage of population below national poverty line

Country	Source A[a]		Source B[b]	
	U[c]	R[d]	U[c]	R[d]
	1990		1990s	
Brazil	13.1	32.6	43	63
	1991		1990s	
Colombia	7.8	29.0	38	68
	1992		1990s	
India	33.7	43.5	4	48
	1992		1990s	
Ghana	26.7	34.3	18	25

[a] World Bank, *1998 World Development Indicators*.

[b] International Labour Organization (ILO), ***World Employment Report 1998–99: Employability in the Global Economy — How Training Matters*** (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998).

[c] U: urban.

[d] R: rural.

Annex X

Description of international data initiatives

Programme	*Description*
Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)	The DHS began in 1984 and is funded primarily by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project is to assist government and private agencies in developing countries in conducting national surveys on population and maternal child health. The main objectives of the programme are to (a) promote widespread dissemination and utilization of DHS data among policy makers, (b) expand the international population and health database, (c) advance survey methodology and (d) develop in participating countries the skills and resources necessary to conduct high-quality demographic and health surveys. The surveys are carried out in a relatively standardized manner.[a] In all, about 80 surveys have been conducted in 53 developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America/ Caribbean.
Living Standard Measurement Survey (LSMS)	The LSMS was designed by the World Bank in 1980 to explore ways of improving the type and quality of household data collected by government statistical offices in developing countries. The objectives were to (a) develop new methods for monitoring progress in raising levels of living, (b) identify the consequences for households of current and proposed government policies and (c) improve communications between survey statisticians, analysts and policy makers. The studies are designed to produce a comprehensive monetary measure of welfare and its distribution and other aspects, and describe patterns of access to and use of social services. By 1997, LSMS-type surveys had been conducted in about 24 countries. With the exception of the first two surveys which were funded from the World Bank's Research Committee, the other surveys competed for funds with other project activities funded by the World Bank and other development agencies.[b]
Multiple-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)	The MICS was designed in 1994 with the collaboration of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Statistics Division and the United States Centers for Disease Control. The concepts, methods and model questionnaire were provided as part of the package on Monitoring Progress towards the Goals of the World Summit for Children. The surveys were proposed when it was determined that either many of the indicators for assessing progress were without data or that the data were from 1990 or earlier.[c] These surveys were carried out in 1995 and 1996 by more than 60 countries worldwide.
National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP)	NHSCP was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank, and implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division. It began in the 1980s and ended mid-1990s, and was designed to build the capacity of countries to conduct surveys on a regular basis. The programme assisted some participating countries in building the infrastructure for conducting surveys. Many of these national survey programmes established through the project are still operational.

Programme	*Description*
General Data Dissemination System (GDDS)	The GDDS (approved in December 1997) is part of a wider programme undertaken by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to guide members in the dissemination to the public of their economic and financial data. In addition to the GDDS, which applies to all Fund members, the Fund has also elaborated special standards (Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)). The General System's purposes are (a) to encourage member countries to improve data quality; (b) to provide a framework for evaluating needs for data improvement and setting priorities in this respect; and (c) to guide member countries in the dissemination to the public of comprehensive, timely, accessible and reliable economic, financial and socio-demographic statistics. Member countries may implement the General System by (a) committing to using the GDDS as a framework for statistical development; (b) designating a country coordinator; and (c) preparing metadata that consist of descriptions of (i) current practices, and (ii) plans for short- and long-term improvements in these practices. These metadata will be disseminated by the Fund through an electronic bulletin board on the Internet.[d]
International Comparison Programme (ICP)	The ICP is a programme to establish systematic international comparisons based on purchasing power parities. It began its activities in 1968 with project staff in the United Nations Statistics Division and in the University of Pennsylvania. Over the years, an increasing number of countries participated in the various phases of the programme (phase I, 1970: 10 countries; phase V, 1985: 64 countries) with detailed price data collection exercises. As of phase IV (1980), the programme was regionalized, that is to say, countries participated through regions or country groups. Financial support was given by various multilateral and regional funding agencies. The programme was reviewed during the 1999 session of the Statistical Commission.[e]

[a] Macro International, Inc., *An Analysis of Sample Design and Sampling Errors of the Demographic and Health Surveys*, Demographic and Health Surveys Analytical Reports, No. 3, May 1997.

[b] M. Grosh and P. Glewwe, *A Guide to Living Standards Surveys and Their Data Sets*, LSMS Working Paper, No. 20 (World Bank, 1995); see also <www.worldbank.org/LSMS/guide/history.html>

[c] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Monitoring Progress towards the Goals of the World Summit for Children: A Practical Handbook for Multiple-Indicator Surveys* (1995).

[d] See also <http:\\dsbb.imf.org>

[e] See the report of the consultant on the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme (E/CN.3/1999/8, annex); see also *Handbook of the International Comparison Programme Studies in Methods*, No. 62 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.XVII.12).